

## **Sustainable Growth, livelihoods and Eco-system Restoration Initiative**

Pakistan welcomes the UN Secretary General' s initiative to convene the Climate Action Summit in September 2019 in New York.

Pakistan supports all effort to encourage the world leaders to present concrete, realistic plans to enhance their nationally determined contributions by 2020, in line with reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 45 per cent over the next decade, and to net zero emissions by 2050.

Even though, as of today, the share of Pakistan in total global GHG emissions is merely 0.8 percent, which places Pakistan at 135<sup>th</sup> in the list of global emitters on per capita basis, we are conscious that as an emerging economy, Pakistan' s total emissions will grow and a realistic estimation is that we are looking at about 300 percent increase during the projected period (2015-2030). Pakistan has promised to reduce up to 20% of its 2030 projected GHG emissions subject to international support in meeting the total abatement cost amounting to about US\$ 40 billion. While national actions are proceeding, Pakistan continues to be hit by a range of climate change related disasters. The intensity and recurrence of such disasters have increase manifolds, bringing the issue of climate change on forefront.

Managing this threat not only necessitates ownership and financial contribution for mitigation and adaptation but also reconfiguring economic growth model that reduces reliance on fossil fuels while simultaneously overcoming environmental degradation.

Taking into account these challenges, need for making progress in implementing the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and consistent with an overarching goal to demonstrate higher level of commitment to mitigating climate change, Pakistan is presenting a new initiative titled “ Sustainable Growth, Livelihoods and Eco-System Restoration” at the forthcoming UNSG' s 2019 Climate Action Summit.

In December 2018, Pakistan had promised to review its NDCs at COP 24 in Katowice, Poland. The new Initiative, to be announced at the highest levels during the forthcoming 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, will act as an additional and concrete component of Pakistan' s review of our NDCs.

### **Background**

This new initiative builds on the successful efforts at overcoming the excessive degradation of forests, vegetation and wildlife resource in Pakistan where the country undertook measures for sustainable management of existing natural resources and mitigating the degradation that occurred in the past. In the recent past, the situation was compounded and impacted by a series of extreme weather events

ranging from droughts, unprecedented temperature levels, recurrent flooding and occasional flash floods.

The changing climate obliged the development professionals and government alike to give high priority into investing into mitigating circumstances. One of the neglected areas has been forest resources development and restoration of allied forest eco-system services. Understanding the value of the natural capital, natural resource conservation and eco-system restoration was seen as an important area of intervention.

The present initiative is built on a humble yet successful and powerful initiative to plant Billion Trees popularly called Billion Trees Afforestation Project (BTAP) by the then government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province in 2015 (Annex-I). The outcomes of BTAP have been duly acknowledged by United Nations Environment Programme, Bonn Challenge and other international bodies and fora.

Following the success and confirmation by the independent monitors, Pakistan decided to set a goal of 10 Billion Tree Plantation, in a phased manner, across Pakistan. This wider project, which is ongoing, is expected to deliver dividend in preserving atmospheric health, reducing greenhouse gas effects, lowering cases of random floods, lowering rains, droughts and enhancing other biodiversity supportive actions.

It is important to underline that one of the most critical features of the success of the earlier Billion Trees Plantation and now 10 billion Trees plantation has been the availability of indigenously accessible financing, highest level of commitment and dedicated management.

Pakistan has gained credible experience in undertaking a much wider Eco-system restoration Initiative. The new initiative is a plan of action, building on evidence and experience that eco-system restoration, as a part of UN Decade for Eco-System Restoration (2020-2030) could act as an effective vehicle to manage risks of environmental degradation and climate change while simultaneously driving economic growth, livelihoods and poverty eradication. Main objectives of the new initiative are three-fold:

- a. facilitating transition towards environmentally resilient Pakistan by main streaming adaptation and mitigation through ecologically targeted initiatives covering afforestation, biodiversity conservation, enabling and enhancing policy environment consistent with the objectives outlined in Pakistan' s Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC);
- b. integrating economic policy, growth and poverty alleviation with efforts at reducing emissions, increasing sink capacity and enhancing resilience within and across forestry, agriculture, oceans and food systems, including through biodiversity conservation, leveraging supply chains and technology;

- c. attaining Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by restoring at least 30% of degraded forest, 5% of degraded cropland, 6% of degraded grassland (rangeland) and 10% of degraded wetlands<sup>1</sup> in Pakistan by 2030 to generate eco-system services and provide additional support to mitigation of GHG in Pakistan.

### **What will the Initiative do?**

The initiative will develop, support and implement projects and programmes on:

- Promoting biodiversity and mitigating land degradation
- Protecting the marine environment from land-based activities
- Protecting the ecological balance in food chains
- Overcoming deforestation and establishing a forest economy
- Preventing high intensity floods through improved flood water management – Recharge Pakistan Programme
- Sustainable Blue Economy

### **How the Initiative will be supported and implement the projects and programme?**

The initiative seeks to establish an independent, transparent and comprehensive financial mechanism in Pakistan to finance the projects and programmes under the initiative. This Fund shall be an independent financial vehicle called “Eco-system Restoration Fund (ESRF)” for which Pakistan commits US\$ 50 million. Key functional aspects include:

- a. Managing financial resources;
- b. Providing country with capacity to act as gateway for enhancing capacity, collecting, blending, coordinating and strengthening national ownership of the effort.
- c. Collecting sources of funds and directing them towards eco-system restoration activities promoting the objectives of the Initiative
- d. Engaging other stakeholders including the private sector in eco-system restoration
- e. Promoting direct access of Funds

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<sup>1</sup> Targets are based on **Draft** LDN target setting exercise supported by UNCCD in Pakistan.

## **Structure of the Fund**

Building on the objective and capitalization of the ESRF, the National Fund will have:

- i. A legal personality;
- ii. Independent multi-stakeholder governing structure led by Pakistan
- iii. International Fiduciary standards;
- iv. Over sight and a trustee

**Billion Tree Afforestation Project-Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, Pakistan**

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KPK) of Pakistan pledged to plant 0.35 million (348,400) hectares of degraded forest lands by 2020 where main forest types are temperature coniferous forest and boreal forests/taiga. By August, 2017 KPK surpassed its target by restoring and planting trees in 350,000 hectares of degraded forests. This massive tree planting campaign contributed to the Bonn Challenge with potential economic benefits of 120 million US\$ and climate related benefit of sequestration of 0.04 Gt of CO<sub>2</sub>. This marked the first Bonn Challenge pledge to reach its restoration goal.

The project achieved its restoration target through a combination of assisted natural regeneration (60%) and planned afforestation (40%). In addition about 13,000 private tree nurseries were established, that boosted local incomes, generated thousands of green jobs, and empowered unemployed youth and women in the province.

The project also contributed towards the improvement of biodiversity by restoring wildlife shelters. The KPK government invested US\$ 123 million in funding and has allocated an additional US\$ 100 million to maintain the project up to June 2020. This support makes the project one of the largest eco-investments ever made in Pakistan.

Due to the tremendous success of Billion Tree project in KPK and gaining world wide acclaim, Pakistan intends to replicate the initiative at the national level by planting 10 Billion Trees.